

# Pepsi to implement new paddy cultivation method

*The direct seeding technology saves water*

VIJAY C ROY

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**P**epsiCo India aims to implement direct seeding technology for paddy cultivation in over 4,000 acres of land in the next paddy season in Punjab. The new method is likely to save 30 per cent water. It aims to implement this in over 550 acres (for the Basmati variety) in the state this season.

The company also aims to implement this on 1,000 acres of land reaching out to around 600 farmers across the country this season. It has entered into a buy-back agreement with the farmers, whose lands have been cultivated under the new methodology.

The traditional method of growing paddy is by planting seeds in a small nursery and then transplanting the sapling manually after about four weeks to the main cultivation area. The saplings are then allowed to grow in the fields filled with about 3 to 4 inches water. This 'puddle irrigation' consumes a lot of water. With the new method, the company claims to save up

to 30 per cent water but will also help in tackling farm labour shortage as the sowing is done by a machine, which is developed locally and costs only Rs.40,000.

PepsiCo announced the success of its innovative direct seeding methodology. Through this unique initiative, the company claims that it has saved 30 per cent (900 kl/acre) of water in the region and has also reduced the production cost.

Speaking to *Business Standard*, PepsiCo India, General Manager (Agriculture), Sushil Sankhiyan said, "Paddy cultivation is known to be very water intensive. Over a period of time, this has resulted in the decline of water table in Punjab. We, as a part of our effort to improve sustainability in the Indian agriculture and to reduce water consumption, introduced this unique technique of direct seeding. We are delighted to see that the technique has been accepted extremely well by the farmers."

He further added, "In 2008, PepsiCo India aims to implement the methodology

in over 1,000 acres of land nationally reaching out to around 600 farmers."

The company has implemented this scheme in districts like Sangrur, Amritsar, Patiala, Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur, etc. and further plans to bring some more districts under this this method.

The company has also implemented this scheme on 50 acres in Rajasthan and 400 acres will be done in the south. "This year we are implementing this technology to only Basmati varieties in Punjab but the technology will be used in sowing other variety of paddy also next year," Sankhiyan added.

It is worth noting that PepsiCo India carried out trials in their own R&D farms in Jallowal in 2004 on many paddy varieties. The irrigation frequency for direct seeding was reconfirmed to be lower by about 30 per cent and the production cost decreased by over Rs 1,000 per acre. The output in direct seeding was found to be marginally higher due to better seeding density.